DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 100 927 SP 008 857

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TITLE Increasing Positive Teacher Actions in the Classroom.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 8p.; Part of this paper was presented at the 82nd Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (New Orleans, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Effective Teaching; *Elementary School Teachers; Feedback; Observational Learning; Research Projects; *Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Improvement
IDENTIFIERS *Positive Reinforcement Observation Schedule

ABSTRACT

A project designed to increase positive teacher actions utilized five fifth-grade teachers as subjects. Each of the five teachers was observed teaching on five different days; each observation was conducted approximately one week apart for a period of 30 minutes. The first two observations provided baseline data since the teachers were not aware of the observational or training procedures. Training procedures, following the initial observations, taught 10 categories of positive action by means of setting specific goals, recording self behavior, observing a model, and using feedback from classroom observations. Results obtained from the Positive Reinforcement Observation Schedule indicated an increase of positive teacher actions from 30 to 50 percent. This represented an increase of 22 percent in positive teacher actions. (MJM)

ED100927

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Increasing Positive Teacher Actions in the Classroom

Much of the literature on the use of behavioral principles in the classroom emphasizes the use of consequences that can be classified as positive teacher actions. Bersoff and Moyer (1972) describe ten categories of possible positive reinforcement. Madsen and Madsen (1970) discuss a positive approach to the use of behavioral principles in teaching. Reports of studies by Martin (1973), Madsen and Madsen (1973) indicate that teachers can become more positive in their interactions with pupils and increase on-task behavior.

Most teacher training programs teach some of the theory or principles of behavior modification. Likewise, several training sessions are utilized. The present investigation explores the efficacy of a relatively short training period with little discussion of behavioral principles. Also, the dependent variable in this study is teacher change rather than pupil change.

Method

Subjects

The subjects for this study were five fifth grade teachers in a Southeastern United States metropolitan school system. All five teachers were team teaching with each other in one large open space with folding partitions. Approximately 150 pupils could be housed in this space. The general management of teaching time involved group instruction in the mornings and various learning center activities in the afternoons. The morning activities were more group centered, while the afternoon activities were more individually oriented. All five teachers were female and ranged in age from the early twenties to the early forties.

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Classroom Observations

Each of the five teachers was observed teaching on five different days. The observations were conducted approximately one week apart. Each observation lasted thirty minutes. The first two observations were combined to form baseline data. The teachers were not aware of the observational or training procedures during baseline data collection. Training procedures followed baseline observations.

Observation time was divided into ten-second intervals with one ten-second interval of recording and rest following each ten-second interval of observation. Teachers received graphic feedback on all observations. Observers were trained to a .60 inter-observer agreement before conducting classroom observations. During each ten-second observation interval, each of the ten presumptive positive reinforcing categories of the Positive reinforcement observation schedule (PROS) (Bersoff and Moyer, 1972) observed was recorded. Each category was marked only once during each ten-second interval. More than one of the ten categories could be observed during a ten-second interval. Percentage of intervals in which each PROS category was used provided the data for this study. To get total positive actions, all ten categories were added together.

Observation Instrument

The Positive reinforcement observation schedule (PROS) (Bersoff and Moyer, 1972) was utilized for both observation and training procedures. The scale contains ten positive, two negative and two neutral categories. The authors of the PROS present evidence that indicates reasonable support for the scale's validity. All ten of the presumptive positive reinforcement categories in the validity study were judged to be potentially reinforcing by being ranked one through ten. These ten categories (aiding by example, positive facial attention,

accepts feelings, positive physical contact, accepts ideas, rapport-praise, affirming appropriate behavior, concrete reinforcement (token), concrete reinforcement (direct) and adjuvant mastery) were used in this study. The two neutral categories (asks questions and non-germane verbal response) and the two negative categories (admonished or negative facial attention) were not used in this study.

Training Procedures

The inservice training program covered a time span of approximately six weeks. The general goal of the training was to increase positive teacher actions in the classroom. The specific goals were: (a) to become aware of current positive reinforcement practices, (b) to learn the ten positive reinforcement categories of the PROS, (c) to practice each of the PROS categories, (d) to try each of the PROS categories in the classroom and (e) to provide teachers with feedback from the classroom observations. Three inservice sessions were held with teachers. The first one lasted for about thirty minutes, while the second and third sessions lasted about two hours each. Hence, approximately four and one half hours of training was utilized.

The first session was devoted to outlining the entire experiment. Plans were made for baseline classroom observations. The teachers were not told about the PROS categories. They were not told that pupils would be excluded from the observations.

During the second session, each teacher was given graphic feedback of the baseline observations. This feedback was the number of ten-second intervals in which each of the ten PROS categories was used divided by the total number of intervals in each observation period. This provided each teacher with percentage figures for each PROS category. The PROS was discussed and role played.

The experimenter modeled many of the behaviors and the teachers practiced them. The third session was used to futher explain and practice the PROS categories.

An integral part of the procedure was an index card that the teachers were to carry as a reminder of the positive actions they were going to attempt on a particular day. They were also to make a record of their positive action on this card. Figure 1 is a representation of the card used by the teachers.

(Insert figure 1 here)

Results and Discussion

The classroom observational data shows some difference in positive teacher actions prior to the initiation of the training procedures and thereafter. The first and second observations were conducted before the initiation of the inservice sessions. This data probe (observations number 1 and 2 combined) indicated that 30% of the ten-second intervals were occupied with positive teacher actions. Observation number three represents the teacher's behavior following the first inservice session. This observation took place two weeks following the inservice session. This was an attempt to allow time to learn the categories and practice them in the classroom. Teacher positive actions increased to 49%. The fourth observation shows positive teacher behavior to be 49%. The fifth and final observation shows positive teacher behavior to be 52%. These figures indicate an increase of 22% in positive teacher actions.

The training procedures used in this study adhere closely to the suggestions by O'Leary and Drabman (1971). The suggestions are: (a) teach recording of own behavior, (b) teach observation of videotape or experimental model of desired behavior and (c) use direct feedback for the teacher about her behavior. The current procedure incorporates one additional step: that of setting specific goals, not only for the type of behavior desired but the amount or number. This study provides some evidence that short inservice sessions, feedback from classroom observations and the setting of specific goals is a viable way to increase positive teacher actions.

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FIGURE 1

Form for Setting Goals and Keeping Record

Days

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. CRD										
2. CRT										
3. AAB										
4. RP										
5. FA+										
6. PC+										
7. AF										
8. AI										
9. AM										
10. AE										

Write in your goals for each day. Begin with one category of positive reinforcement and add one additional category each succeeding day. This means that on the tenth day, you will be using all ten categories. Each category should be used a minimum of twice each day. On the tenth day, you will be using a minimum of forty incidents of positive actions. This procedure is designed for a time span of sixty minutes per day.

Goals

Day 1: List one category. _____
Day 2: List the previous category + one additional one. _____
Day 3: List the previous categories + one additional one. _____
Day 4: List the previous categories + one additional one. _____
Day 5: List the previous categories + one additional one. _____
Day 6: List the previous categories + one additional one. _____
Day 7: List the previous categories + one additional one. _____
Day 8: List the previous categories + one additional one. _____
Day 9: List the previous categories + one additional one. _____
Day 10: List the previous categories + one additional one. _____